



CVJV MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE/TIME: February 13, 2014

PLACE: Delta Conservancy Office, West Sacramento, CA

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

PASSING THE GAVEL: This was the last meeting for Ellie Cohen, Point Blue Conservation Science, to serve as CVJV Board Chair. John Carlon, River Partners, will serve as Chair for the next two years, and assumed those duties beginning with this meeting.

Other changes:

- This was Bob Shaffer's last meeting as CVJV Coordinator. His retirement date is set for March 3, 2014. The Board congratulated Bob on his retirement and celebrated with cake and gifts.
- Tim Rust has replaced Dan Strait as the Bureau of Reclamation's ex-officio representative on the Board. Since 1992, staff from the Division of Environmental Affairs have been in this position (beginning with Bob Shaffer), but with the current CVJV emphasis on water issues, a decision was made by BOR have someone from the water division serve in this position. Tim currently oversees the refuge water supply and fish programs, both under CVPIA.
- Kim Delfino introduced Haley Stewart. She joined the California office of Defenders of Wildlife, formerly in Washington D.C. working with the Democratic Policy Committee. She will be DOW Board alternate.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 14, 2013 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

It was moved and seconded (Hertel/Cohen) to approve the minutes with one correction – John Donnelly, Wildlife Conservation Board was added to the attendee list. Motion passed.

NEXT TWO BOARD MEETING DATES/PLACES

- **May 8, 2014 Delta Conservancy**
- **August 12, 2014 Place TBD**

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The CVJV Science Excellence Award was presented to Mike Wolder, USFWS, Sacramento National Wildlife Complex. Curt McCasslan, USFWS Acting Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Dan Frisk, Sacramento NWRC Project Leader spoke about his many contributions. John Carlon acknowledged his over 20 year of service and dedication to bird resources in the Central Valley. Previous recipients included John Eadie, UC Davis; Mike Miller, USGS; and Joe Fleskes, USGS.

PRESENTATIONS

- Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever, Inc. – Current activities and opportunities for collaboration (Dan Connelly, CA State Coordinator, Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever, Inc.)

Connelly served 27-years with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife where he was a senior wildlife biologist supervising waterfowl, upland game and game bird heritage programs. He also spent seven years as the Valley Bay CARE Coordinator for Ducks Unlimited. He is currently the primary contact in California for Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever, Inc., which is home to six Pheasants Forever (PF) chapters, one Quail Forever (QF) chapter and over 1,000 combined PF/QF members. He participates on California's Upland Game Bird Advisory Committee and associated upland game bird habitat programs. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever are the nation's largest nonprofit organizations dedicated to upland habitat conservation. Combined, Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever have over 130,000 members and 700 local chapters across the United States and Canada.

Connelly noted that the drought may provide some opportunities for idled land, such as cover cropping, but benefits may not be seen for a couple of years. Another open may be to establish a rolling landscape of upland units (~50,000 acres) that would provide habitat similar to set-aside programs. Fundraising opportunities for the organization can be available for cost-share projects.

- Workshop: Finding Ways to Restore Delta Habitat and Protect Property owners Jan 28-29, 2014: State Projects and In-Delta Concerns (Michael Perrone, DWR, Agricultural Stewardship)

The Delta Conservancy and the Water Education Foundation will be hosting two FREE workshops on "Finding Ways to Restore Delta Habitat and Protect Property Owners" Jan. 28 and Jan. 29. The Jan. 28 workshop will be from 1-5 p.m. at the Mokelumne High School Auditorium in Courtland. The Jan. 29 workshop will be from 1-5 p.m. at the Roberts Union Farm Center in Stockton. The agenda for Tuesday is below and the agendas for both workshops are attached.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

LANDS COMMITTEE (Chairs-Virginia Getz, DU/Jake Messerli, CWA)

The CVJV Lands Committee met on January 29th at DU's office in Rancho Cordova. Topics discussed included the status of land protection efforts in the American Basin, recent TNC easement established in the Sutter Basin, latest version of SWRCB's proposed wetlands policy, TNC/CRC's rice pilot program, drought and implications for wetlands and rice lands, and possible Lands Committee role in CVJV's review of BDCP. For a copy of the minutes, contact Virginia Getz, vgetz@ducks.org.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (Chair-Greg Yarris, CVJV)

Implementation Plan Update: Bird Working Groups have been meeting and are moving forward with their respective topics.

- The Riparian Working Group has decided to change their planning boundary to consolidate some basins.
- There have been discussions to come up with goals for the secondary focus area (300' to 3000') and to refine the boundary between the San Joaquin and Tulare Basins, leaving Mendota WA in the Tulare Basin.
- A Scenario Planning workshop is being planned for mid-summer.

- Joe Fleskes, USGS, has received an LCC grant to incorporate his climate change model in to the Plan update.
- The Shorebird Working Group will meet on April 9th. Using an LCC grant, they w Discussion at the Board Retreat will focus on drivers and threats that will need to be addressed in the update.

Post-harvested Rice Surveys conducted by Jay Dee Garr: Roadside surveys were conducted during the winter of 2013-14 reassess the winter status of post-harvested rice fields in the Sacramento Valley. Data gathered adds to the body of knowledge collected in the 1980s and during the winters of 2007-08 and 2008-09. It will update information contained in the 2008 and 2009 documents *"Status of Rice Fields During Midwinter in the Sacramento Valley, California"*. For copies of these reports, contact Greg Yarris.

BDCP Comments: Greg will distribute a spreadsheet of BDCP conservation measures to CVJV partners. He requested that each partner identify the areas that their organization plans to evaluate and submit comments.

Coastal California (BCR 32) Waterbird Conservation Plan, associated with the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative (Rob Doster, USFWS)

This plan, soon to be completed, covers the U.S. portion of Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 32, which encompasses the coastal slope and Coast Ranges of central and southern California and the Central Valley. The plan covers 46 species of waterbirds and provides a foundation for partnerships of individuals and institutions to implement the broader initiative's vision regionally by sustaining or restoring the distribution, diversity, and abundance of populations and habitats of breeding, migratory, and non-breeding waterbirds in BCR 32.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE (Ruth Ostroff, CVJV)

- National Joint Ventures CEO Team Activities

Annual Meeting: The National Joint Ventures Communication/Education/Outreach Team (CEOT) held their annual meeting on January 9-10 in the Sacramento area. On the afternoon of the 9th from 3:30-5pm at the Yolo Basin Wildlife Area, there was a panel discussion with federal and state legislative staff and others who professionally conduct outreach to Congress. The panel included Tom Bohigian, State Director for Senator Barbara Boxer; Anne Sanger, Policy Advisor for Congresswoman Doris Matsui; Tom Roth, Environmental Consultant for Senator Noreen Evans; Rachelle Caouette, Regulatory Advisor for Senator Jean Fuller; Michael Woodbridge, Congressional Liaison, USFWS Region 8; Mark Hennelly, VP Legislative Affairs & Public Policy for CWA. Topics focused on the most effective ways to share information and build relationships. A reception followed the event.

National Joint Ventures Website: The CEO Team has been working hard on the new National Joint Ventures Website and they hope to have it completed by the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards annual trip to the hill in March.

WATER COMMITTEE (Chair-Jeanne Brantigan, TNC)

CVP Drought Strategy discussions (Jeanne Brantigan, Dale Garrison)

CVPIA/Reclamation Stakeholder Technical and Policy Team Update: Team is focusing on:

- Resolving policy issue to maximize Level 2 supplies across refuge program

- Informal federal solicitor opinion issued.
- Pursuing meeting with BOR Central Valley Operations to discuss opportunities.
- Identifying and resolving barriers to transferring refuge water. Key issue that has arisen is the need to identify consumptive use before CVO will transfer water within the refuge program. Grasslands WD has initiated work on compiling information and studying this further.
- Maintaining a tracking system for progress on pursuing and implementing strategies to improve water deliveries
- Making sure Refuge Water Supply Program is aware of potential impacts to refuge water as a result of broad drought response and CVP water management actions

Post-Harvest Rice Habitat / Compatible Agricultural Practices

- GGSA Project B.11:
 - Delayed for reconsideration in 2015
- Little water likely to be available for rice decomp practices next fall.
 - Given little to no water, how can we encourage practices that promote the best habitat on the landscape? Growers likely to be doing work in the fields anyway.

Potential CVJV Roles in Drought

- Identify points of agreement across our organizations and other bird interests in the state, and get that message to policymakers and water managers.
- Make sure state and federal policies to address drought don't inadvertently harm migrating birds/habitat. Suggest solutions that optimize water management for bird habitat lands while recognizing other environmental needs and agricultural partners.
- Identify and promote post-harvest practices that provide best habitat conditions if water is not available.
- Remind policymakers that we have built successful partnerships and achieved great multi-benefit successes with bird habitat on agricultural land, but that habitat is very scarce this year.

REFUGE WATER SUPPLY REPORT

Refuge Water Supply Update (Dale Garrison, USFWS)

Dale gave a bleak report on the state of water for refuges.

- 35,000 acre feet have been acquired (usually 50,000-60,000).
- Refuges are doing water conservation planning – ponds are going dry early and may remain dry.
- Level 2 water supplies may be reduced from 25-75% of normal. There may not be much water available for purchase.
- Initial allocation letters will be going out next week. Refuges are looking at water conservation measures and may need to use some of the wells that are not usually used. Costs are a concern. This will influence the ability to manage trust species.
- Less rice may be planted this year, and there will probably be reduced post-harvest flooded rice. This may mean more concentration of birds on refuges. Recreational opportunities could be restricted.

Refuge Water supply opportunities (Ken Swanson, SL/Delta Mendota WA)

Ken Swanson reported that the initial allocation of Level 2 refuge water will likely be reduced and potentially less than 75% because of the lack of Central Valley Project (CVP) available due to the drought. In addition, it will be very difficult to acquire Incremental Level 4 (IL4) water this year because of the lack of available water. The largest block of IL4 water is usually acquired from the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors (SJREC) through a transfer agreement but this water may not be available if the SJREC allocation is reduced.

Opportunities to develop groundwater will be the focus to try and have some brood water in the wetland areas this spring. Grassland Water District is looking to expand the number of wells that are included in its Groundwater Acquisition Pilot Project. In addition, GWD is working with the local State and Federal Refuge Managers and Reclamation to try and operate the Volta Wells during the May through August period to support the last known reproductive population of Giant Garter Snakes south of the Delta. This population of snakes is located in the Volta Wildlife Area and in the Los Banos Creek corridor.

Work continues on the North Grasslands Water Conservation and Water Quality Control Project. Design is about 90 percent complete and GWD continues to negotiate with the landowners for the required easements. It is anticipated that construction on the project will begin in May 2015 and be operational by September 2016. When completed the project will develop an average of 15,000 acre-feet (AF) of water per year.

Work also continues on the Los Banos Creek Water Resources Management Plan, Project 1. It is anticipated that construction of the facilities required for the diversion of water from Los Banos Creek into the Delta-Mendota Canal will begin this summer and be operational later this year. The GWD share of the project could provide on average approximately 2,700 AF per year to the refuges. These long term projects are important in moving away from the necessity of having to compete and acquire all the IL4 water on the open market.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (Chairs-Mark Hennelly, CWA, Meghan Hertel, Audubon)

State and Federal Legislative updates (Mark Hennelly, CWA, Kim Delfino, Defenders, Meghan Hertel, Audubon, Dean Kwasny):

Water Bond:

- Changes this week cut the size of the draft bill by half.
- Lois Wolk's bill took out refuge water funding. Hearing to be held Feb 11.

Mosquito Abatement:

- Previous bill with BMPs and funding has sunsetted; in that bill, flexibility was provided; some of the BMPs were waterfowl-friendly.
- Concerns with new bill: inflexible; water on managed wetlands must be managed for mosquito control rather than waterfowl habitat; no funding provided to state to do practices mandated by bill
- Proposed bill not likely to be heard again until June.

AB 823 (Eggman) Bill / CEQA Guidelines proposed revisions:

- Addresses vectors resulting from mitigation measures. Deadline for comments is Feb 14.

SB 371 Drought Emergency Bill:

- May present opportunities for cover crop program. Addresses protection of soil in drought conditions. Implications for residue management and next rice decomp season.
- Input needed to NRCS program.

SB 731 (Steinberg): Urgency amendments to water use efficiency and other projects. Presents opportunities for funding for cover crops on fallowed land, and multi-benefit projects that include waterfowl habitat. Organizations are submitting comments independently.

Farm Bill Agricultural Act of 2014 (H.R. 2642) (Dean Kwasny) The new Farm bill was signed into law on February 7th. Highlights:

- Conservation compliance and federal crop insurance premium assistance relinked.
- The Conservation Reserve Program reduced to 24 million acres.
- The Conservation Stewardship Program has enrollment authority of 10 million acres per year, with no forest limitation.
- The new Regional Conservation Partnership Program is funded at \$100 million per year, plus 7% of the funding from eligible programs.
- The easement programs are combined into one umbrella program, without specific funding percentages for the agriculture land vs. wetland easement subprograms, and with a waiver of cash match requirements for grasslands of special environmental significance. The bill establishes baseline funding for easements for the first time, and annual funding levels for FY14-18 are \$400; 425; 450; 500; and 250 million per year, respectively.
- The combined EQIP/ WHIP program provides "at least 5 percent" of EQIP for wildlife, and retains the 60% target for livestock. The total EQIP funding for FY 2014-2018 is \$1.35; 1.6; 1.65; 1.65; and 1.75 billion per year, respectively.

NAWCA and Other Conservation Program Funding: The Congressional appropriation to fund the Act's Grants Program in FY 2014 is \$31,175.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Board Retreat – a retreat is slated for mid-March to discuss how to move forward with the Plan Update and a process for hiring the new CVJV Coordinator.
- NAWCA Grants (Bob Shaffer, CVJV)

Five proposals were submitted in July 2013 and subsequently ranked by the CVJV. The following have been forwarded to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for funding approval at their March 26th meeting:

- Northern Tulare/San Joaquin Basins V Project
- Suisun Wetlands Conservation I
- California Delta and Yolo Basin Habitat Project Phase II
- Tulare Basin Wetlands Restoration III

Small grant proposals will be accepted by the Division of Bird Habitat Conservation until February 28th.

ADJOURN (at 4:00 with opportunity to see the waterfowl flyoff from the driving tour at dusk)